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GIFT

TERMS OF COMMUNION.

The first law of the United States, which was passed in 1790, was the Naturalization Act. This act established the process by which immigrants could become citizens of the United States. It required that immigrants be at least 21 years old, be of sound mind and body, and be of good character. They also had to be members of one of the Christian religions. The act also required that immigrants live in the United States for at least five years before they could apply for citizenship. This act was a landmark in the history of the United States, as it established the first law governing the process of naturalization.

[illegible]

TWO LETTERS

ON THE

TERMS OF COMMUNION

AT THE

LORD'S TABLE,

TO A PEDOBAPTIST..

BY E. FOSTER.

The Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed a solemn worship under the gospel, which all his disciples are obliged constantly and invariably to observe. With respect hereto, men may fall away and apostatize from the gospel, no less sinfully and fatally than they may fall from the mystery of its doctrine or the holiness of its precepts. There are two ways whereby this may be done. 1. By neglecting and refusing to observe and do what he hath appointed. 2. By adding appointments of our own thereto, inconsistent with, and destructive of that which he hath ordained.

DR. OWEN.



DOVER:

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PREFATORY ADDRESS.

DEAR READER—When I published my *Examination of Christian Baptism*, I had no thought of writing any thing like this. I believed there was no difference of opinion, on the terms of communion, between the Baptists and Pedobaptists. But I soon discovered that what is called *close communion*, as it is viewed by our Pedobaptist brethren, presents an insuperable bar to union, independent of our difference on the subject of Christian Baptism. To break down this bar to a union so much to be desired, and to prepare the way to fellowship and co-operation in the defence and promulgation of truth, is the object of the present work. My prayer is that it may be productive of good.

Yours affectionately,

THE AUTHOR.

Dover, N. H. Sept. 24, 1830.



PRINTED BY C. C. P. MOODY.

"Gift"

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LETTER I.

TERMS OF COMMUNION.

DEAR BROTHER—I have received your communication, and cheerfully reciprocate the kind feelings therein expressed. By it you inform me, that you are “not satisfied that *sprinkling* or *infant baptism* are Divine institutes;” that “in these two things” you are “willing to believe the Baptists to be correct.” But you object to “the idea that a difference of opinion or practice in these two things should form a bar against free communion at the Lord’s table.”

“Would it not accord better with your professions of love, and with the rules of the gospel,” you ask, “to invite all real Christians to the table of the Lord? Has not the Lord received them? Has he not invited them? Have they not the same right you have? Will not all saints commune together in heaven?”—And, at the close of your letter, you somewhat pleasantly insinuate, that “there may possibly be some degree of *bigotry* at the bottom of this *close communion*.”

BIGOTRY, my dear brother? You startle me! Let us examine the meaning of the word.

BUCK. “Bigotry consists in being obstinately and perversely attached to our own opinions; or, as some have defined it, ‘*a tenacious adherence to a system adopted without investigation, and defended without argument, accompanied with a malignant intolerant spirit towards all who differ.*’ It must be distinguished from *love to truth*, which influences a man to embrace it *wherever* he finds it; and from *true zeal*, which is an ardour of mind exciting its possessor to defend and propagate the principles he maintains. * * * As it is the effect of *ignorance*, so it is the nurse of it, *because it precludes free inquiry, and is an enemy to truth.*”

This is an abominable principle, and ought to be execrated by all lovers of truth and righteousness. If we see it in each other, we should faithfully expose it, that it may be shunned. The best way to discover it, how-

ever, is told us by our Saviour, when he speaks of the “mote” and the “beam.” Let us both be careful that *we do not tenaciously adhere to a system adopted without investigation, or defended without argument*, lest we be justly denounced as bigots.

We will, therefore, now *freely* investigate the subject you have proposed, and inquire what are the terms of communion, and examine the arguments by which they are sustained.

I. “Order,” my brother, “is heaven’s first law.” Without order, the beauties of creation would be annihilated; chaos would at once ensue. The worlds of light moving in confusion might declare their Maker’s power, but not his wisdom; and it would be impossible for his creatures to feel secure from the danger of being crushed by conflicting worlds. Without order, every thing is distorted and unseemly, loses its power to please, and ceases to be useful. Order in religion is as beautiful as it is in the works of creation. Without it religion would by no means appear in its proper proportion, or be so well adapted to the end for which it was designed. There must be some defect in our mental vision, if religion does not appear to us most lovely and beautiful, dressed and adorned as she descended from heaven. “Let all things be done decently, and *in order*,” says Paul; and surely we shall, in this way only, honour God and the religion we profess.

Shall I illustrate this sentiment by sacred history?

It was the duty of the Jewish priests to offer sacrifices at the temple; but it was their duty to wash or bathe themselves first. It was *not* their duty to offer sacrifices *unwashed*;—it would be sin to do it.

It was the duty of all Israel to march at the command of God: but it was their duty to march in a *prescribed order*; not in any other order; nor in *disorder*;—it would be sin to do it.

It was the duty of Moses to erect the tabernacle in the wilderness; but saith JEHOVAH, “According to all I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so

shall ye make it."—It would be sin to make it otherwise.

It was the duty of Nadab and Abihu to burn incense before the Lord; but it was not their duty to burn it with strange fire;—it was sin to do it.

All the ordinances of the gospel are binding upon all men; but they bear a certain relation to each other, which should not be overlooked. It is the duty of all men to be baptized, to join the church, to partake of the Lord's Supper; but it is *not* their duty, unless they have *first* repented, and believed the gospel;—it would be sin to do it.

One duty must not be trampled upon or perverted, in order to come at another duty; for, in that case, even what would, otherwise, be the performance of duty becomes a sin. You perceive, dear brother, from the instances adduced, that *positive* laws have both *mode* and *tense*; and that the *order* of God's commands, as well as their *nature*, should be diligently sought out, and faithfully observed.

II. It becomes a question then, to us of no ordinary importance, What relation does baptism sustain to the Lord's Supper, *as to time*? The answer is, that

Baptism is pre-requisite to the Lord's Supper.

Baptism may be styled a *gospel* ordinance, and not a *church* ordinance; because it is not administered to church members; and because the pastor has authority to administer it independently of the concurrence of the church.

The Lord's Supper may be styled a *church* ordinance; because it is to be administered only to church members; and because the pastor cannot administer it without the concurrence of the church.

Believers are commanded to be baptized. They must be baptized either *before* or *after* their admission into the church. If the latter, then baptism is a church ordinance, and must be administered only to church members. If the former, then baptism is pre-requisite to church-membership, and, of course, is pre-requisite to the Lord's Supper; since no one will contend, that the Lord's Supper is pre-requisite to church membership.

But the position taken, dear brother, does not depend upon abstract reasoning. It is sustained by the most unexceptionable evidence.

1. Our Lord, in the commission he gave his Apostles, enjoined baptism immediately upon the exercise of faith, and, after that, an observance of all things whatsoever he commanded.

We have reason to believe, that the Apostles so understood their commission.—Peter, the first time he preached under the authority of this commission, commanded his hearers to “repent and be baptized,” and, afterwards, “with many *other* words did he testify and exhort.”

We have reason to believe, that the people so understood the Apostles.—“They that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfast in the Apostle’s doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Thus the primitive disciples, first “gladly received the word; then, “were baptized;” then, “were added to the church;” then, “continued steadfast in the Apostle’s doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread,” &c. Thus Paul, first, believed; then, “was baptized;” then, “assayed to join himself to the other disciples.” An order different from this can no where be discovered in the New-Testament.

The table of the Lord is spread, not without, but within the church; it is there laden with the emblems of his dying love. Believers must enter the church before they can partake of the Supper. By baptism, they put on Christ; profess themselves to be his servants; then, they enter the church; then, partake of the Lord’s Supper. This is a delightful and consistent order, and we would not be the first to interrupt it.

BAXTER. “Their (the Apostles’) *first* task is, by teaching, to make disciples; the *second* work is to baptize them; the *third* work is to teach them all things which are afterwards to be learned in the

school of Christ. *To condemn this order, is to renounce all order ; for where can we expect to find it if not here ?*"

Mr. Baxter's remarks here, I consider judicious ; and they come home with weight to our reason and our consciences.

2. The ancient churches universally practiced upon the belief that *baptism is pre-requisite to the Lord's Supper*. St. Austin, though he believed the Lord's Supper to be necessary to salvation, would not admit to it the unbaptized. "They cannot," says he, "unless they are baptized." This sentiment is every where to be seen in the writings of the ancient fathers. Please to observe the following testimonies.

JUSTIN MARTYR. "This food is called by us the Eucharist, of which it is *unlawful* for any to partake, but such as believe the things that are taught by us to be true, *and have been baptized*."

DR. WALL. "No church ever gave the communion to *any persons*, before they were baptized. *Among all the absurdities that ever were held, none ever maintained that, that any person should partake of the communion before he was baptized*."

BENEDICT PICTET. "The Supper of our Lord *ought not* to be administered to persons that are *unbaptized* ; for, before baptism men are not considered as members of the visible church."

LORD CHANCELLOR KING. "Baptism was *always precedent* to the Lord's Supper ; and *none* were admitted to receive the Eucharist, *till* they were baptized. This is so obvious to every man, that it needs no proof.

DR. GILL. "To receive an unbaptized person into communion, *was never once attempted among all the corruptions of the church of Rome*."

DR. DODDRIDGE. "It is certain, that, as far as our knowledge of primitive antiquity reaches, *no unbaptized person received the Lord's Supper*. * * * How excellent soever any man's character is, *he must* be baptized, before he can be looked upon as completely a member of the church of Christ."

These testimonies I consider sufficient to establish the fact, that ancient churches practiced upon the belief that *baptism is pre-requisite to the Lord's Supper*. I will add,

3. All modern churches, with exceptions very diminutive, practice upon the same belief. I know not any that do not, but those who are called Open-communion Baptists and Free-will Baptists. It is the belief of your own denomination; it is the belief of mine.

We conclude then, that the proposition, stated in the first part of the present section, is agreeable to the command of Christ, the practice of the Apostles and primitive disciples, and of the Christian church in every age. Such a coincidence of opinion is certainly very rare, and can be accounted for only from its truth and evidence.

I desire you now, my brother, to go back and review every step we have taken; for, should there be any defect in the preceding arguments, it might materially affect the whole of those that follow.

I have now shown that *order* is a very material thing in positive institutions; insomuch as it sometimes alters their very nature. I have also shown the relative order of the two gospel ordinances; that baptism preceeds the Lord's Supper, and that this has been the acknowledged order ever since these ordinances were instituted.

I come now to make deductions from what has already been proved.

III. *If, by the law of Christ, the example of his Apostles and the practice of the church in every age, baptism is pre-requisite to the Lord's Supper; then, it is unlawful and wicked for an unbaptized person to partake of the Lord's Supper.*

This is the general impression of such persons as think themselves unbaptized. Indeed, I never heard of any such offering themselves as communicants. They generally would tremble to do it. Such an impression is perfectly correct. For,

1. An unbaptized person has no precept, or exam-

ple in the New Testament to warrant his approach to the table of the Lord. Precepts and examples are all against it. All the precepts are addressed to persons baptized. All examples are of persons baptized. All analogy between the Old and New Testament ordinances, which are so much urged in other cases, are wholly against it. Nothing naturally leads to it, except the idea, that because a person is a child of God, he is at liberty to deal familiarly with his ordinances, in the same way as a child, because his parents love him, may presume to be mischievous.

2. If an unbaptized person approaches the Lord's table, he tramples upon an ordinance most emphatically enjoined by Christ in the commission he gave his Apostles. For this he has no excuse whatever. Baptism is not so arduous a duty, as that he cannot perform it. There is no more difficulty in it than in the ordinary business of life. It is no less a privilege than the Lord's Supper. It is no less a duty than the Lord's Supper.

3. This course is not only against all law and precedent, but is of a most pernicious tendency. If it be once admitted, that a man may choose what law of Christ he will observe, and what law he will neglect, it is also, de facto, admitted that Christ is not king and lawgiver in his church, and that each one may with impunity, dispute his authority. This is practically advancing one step beyond even Socinianism.

Thus what, in its proper order, would be a duty, becomes, by being wrested out of its proper order, a sin.

Are you ready to admit this, my dear brother? If so, let us proceed a little way further.

If it is sin for the unbaptized to partake of the Lord's Supper, it is either a wilful sin, or a sin of ignorance. If we suppose it to be a sin of ignorance, it must be so, either because the person had no instruction, or because his instruction was defective and erroneous.

If it is sin for the unbaptized to approach the table of the Lord, it must be sin for *the church* to invite any unbaptized person to the table of the Lord; since by so doing they invite to sin.

The result of this argument is this,

1. *No unbaptized person should presume to approach the table of the Lord.*

2. *No church should invite such to the Lord's table as they believe to be unbaptized.*

This result is perfectly consistent with the practice of Pedobaptist churches and with the word of God. I apprehend there is no difference between the Baptists and the Pedobaptists, with regard to the principle here established. The only question to be decided between them is, *What is Christian Baptism?* Could this be determined to the satisfaction of both parties, they could be separate denominations no longer. They both refuse to admit such as they believe unbaptized; and, by thus refusing they practically say, that it is unlawful to admit them; for it would not only be unkind, but criminal to refuse to indulge a brother in what is not sinful.

IV. I am now prepared, my brother, to attend to your queries, and will answer them in order as briefly as possible.

1. *"Would it not accord better with your professions of love, and with the rules of the gospel, to invite all real Christians to the table of the Lord?"*

We do cheerfully invite *all real Christians*, not only to the Lord's table, but to his baptism. But we invite them to these privileges in their proper order. We do not invite them, and we believe we have no right to invite them, to a *disorderly* observance of them; because it would be sin to do it. *"Our professions of love"* will not permit it. *"The rules of the gospel"* will not permit it.

2. *"Has not the Lord received them?"*

True. He receiveth sinners; but we cannot, for that reason, receive them at the Lord's table. It is not what God himself does, but what he has commanded us to do, that should be *our* rule of duty.

3. *"Has he not invited them?"*

Not to the Lord's table before they are baptized.

4. *"Have they not the same right you have?"*

This we admit; but neither they, nor we have any right, unless baptized.

5. *"Will not all saints commune together in heaven?"*

Doubtless. Many unbaptized, many also who have not on earth approached the table of the Lord, will commune together in heaven. There, they will all be obedient; all will harmonize in sentiment and practice. No discipline will be needed to preserve the purity of the church. The church on earth is differently organized; rules and discipline are needed; Christians must be watched over, exhorted, reproved, and sometimes excommunicated, according to fixed and definite rules given by Christ himself. How improper is it, in this case, then, to argue from heaven to earth! In this way it may be shown, that churches should have no discipline, no ordinances, no preaching, no prayers; because there will be none in heaven.

This, I apprehend, is the only proper way of answering such questions. It is not, it cannot be, our duty to give up general principles, established by divine authority and apostolic example, for the sake of indulging either our own feelings, or the feelings of our brethren. Our duty to Christ as Lawgiver is paramount. Is this bigotry, my brother?

What disobedient child of God are you pleading for so earnestly? Let him not persist in his disobedience. Let him be baptized, and unite with the church; then, no one can object to his participating with the church in the emblems of Divine love. It is his duty. It is his privilege. If he refuses one ordinance, why should he be so desirous of the other? Let him know, that it is the willing and obedient, that shall eat the good of the land.

V. What would be the tendency of admitting unbaptized persons to the Lord's table?

A man who sustains a good moral character, and gives evidence of piety in every other way but by being baptized, proposes to be received at the communion of a certain church. Suppose the church admits him time after time, and waits to see him inclined to obey his Lord by being baptized. Finally an officer of the church, dissatisfied with his delay, visits him, and addresses him thus:—"My brother, when you

proposed to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, we made no objection, because we believed it would be a privilege to you ; but we did hope, that you would not stop here, when another duty equally important was presented as a test of your obedience and love. You are well aware that we discipline our own members for the neglect of duty towards each other, and especially for the neglect of the ordinances of the gospel ; and we certainly ought not to indulge you in that which would subject our own members to reproof and excommunication. I do not see how we can continue to admit you, unless you are baptized. Should we do it, I see not but it may come to pass, that all will choose to remain, as you do, out of the church, that they may enjoy all its privileges, and avoid all its burdens and difficulties ; and, in that case, the church will soon become extinct." Now I ask, would not these apprehensions be well grounded ? Would not the very extinction of visible churches be the natural consequence of such a course pursued ? I believed it would. Yet this disobedient communicant might answer:—" You knew that I had neglected the duty of baptism before you first received me. I am not more disobedient *now*, than I *then* was. You might have refused me *then*, with the *same* propriety you *now* can. I am satisfied with my present privileges ; and, if you refuse to admit me now, you must undo what you have done." This is a dilemma in which I could wish no church to be placed. There is no danger of it, so long as they hold baptism to be pre-requisite to church membership, and church membership pre-requisite to the Lord's Supper. In short, if we pay no regard to the order of positive institutions, we know not whether they are fulfilled or not. If we fail of giving heed to every necessary circumstance relative to an ordinance, we know not how far we may be led into error. Some may say that such things as these are not essential ; but let such look at the church of Rome, and tremble at the presumption of such a sentiment. That church is a standing evidence of the importance of preserving pure the ordinances of the gospel ; for in them she first discovered her apostacy.

I hope, my brother, that you will not, from what I have said, suppose, that I consider baptism the only pre-requisite to the Lord's Supper. Surely not. Faith is pre-requisite to baptism, baptism to church fellowship, church fellowship to communion at the Lord's Supper. Baptism will not qualify an unbeliever for the Lord's Supper; but it will a believer.

I have now very briefly stated my belief respecting the terms of church communion, and the reasons upon which it rests. If I have not been sufficiently explicit in what I have written, or if I have not met all the objections that arise in your mind against the principles here established, you will let me know it, and I will try again. In the mean time I hope we shall both be so far free from "*bigotry*" and prejudice, as to be willing "to embrace the truth wherever we find it."

Yours affectionately.

E. FOSTER.

LETTER II.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

DEAR BROTHER—Your second letter has been duly received, and diligently perused. By it you inform me, that you find no fault with the argument of my former letter; but, in your opinion, "it does not fully display the principles of what is called *close communion*; there are difficulties that arise far beyond its reach."

"Among those, whom the Baptists refuse to admit to the communion," you say, "are to be found,

1. Those who sincerely believe themselves to be baptized, and who in every respect, but in baptism, believe as the Baptists do.
2. Those who, according to the views of the Baptists, are baptized, though in other respects they differ.
3. Those who both in sentiment and practice are Baptists though they belong to Pedobaptist churches."

You say, the Orthodox Congregationalists, the Methodists, the Free-will Baptists, and some Baptists commune together, and they all invite the Baptists to their communion and you wish to know, "if the principle laid down and established in the former letter, peremptorily forbids the Baptists accepting and returning such an invitation."

It will, I fear, require a letter of no ordinary length, to exhibit the propriety of restricted communion in all the cases you have mentioned. I will do all I can, however, to show in what cases the principle already displayed should operate. But this is not the only one which should be observed in the course of church dealing; others will be mentioned in their proper place.

I. You propose the case of your own denomination, "who sincerely believe themselves to be baptized and who in every respect, but in baptism, believe as we do." I will, if you please, introduce a brother of each party, and leave the Baptist to give his reasons for not inviting the Pedobaptist to the communion.

Pedobaptist. People talk hard about your denomination, my brother. They say that you are illiberal, and bigoted; and that you unnecessarily separate yourselves from others, as though you were better than they.

Baptist. Why so? We are not conscious of such feelings.

Pedobaptist. Why, then, do you not invite us to the Lord's table?

Baptist. Not because we do not wish to meet you there; but because we believe you are not baptized. This is the only thing that prevents our receiving you. If we believed you baptized, we should join with you, and become one denomination.

Pedobaptist. We acknowledge *immersion* to be valid baptism; but we think, that *pouring* or *sprinkling* will answer the same purpose. The mode we think quite an unimportant thing.

Baptist. I know that to be your opinion; but it is adopted without reason. Among all the Lexicons

ever written, no one can be found to justify this opinion. No learned man of *your own* denomination has, in his comments or criticisms upon the sacred text, ever ventured his reputation upon the assertion, that the word translated to baptize means to pour or to sprinkle. For 1300 years after Christ, immersion was the general mode. History plainly shows us, that sprinkling and pouring were *originated* among the corruptions of the church of Rome. For proof of this, I appeal to the testimony of *your own* writers.

Pedobaptist. I do not believe it.

Baptist. True, but are you not quite "*illiberal*" to refuse to admit, in favour of the Baptists, what is certainly true, and is proved to be so, by your most celebrated writers?—According to them, pouring and sprinkling are not baptism, and, therefore, you are not baptized.

Pedobaptist. But you do not know, but that I was *plunged* in my infancy. Suppose I were, would you then admit me?

Baptist. We could not; because it is not, in our view, *Christian* baptism. I suppose you will admit, that *believer's* baptism is a positive institution, is clearly and explicitly stated in the New Testament, and confirmed by apostolic example.

Pedobaptist. True, but that does not prove, that *infant* baptism is not an ordinance of the gospel.

Baptist. Most clearly. For infant baptism either *is* a law, or is *not* a law. If it *is not* a law, it ought not to be substituted for a law; since, in that case, it is a transgression of that law. If it *is* a law, it is either *moral* or *positive*; since all laws are, either the one, or the other. If it is a *moral* law, like all *moral* laws, it is binding on all creatures in heaven and earth. If it is a *positive* law, like all *positive* laws, it is a law only so far as it is distinctly expressed and promulgated by the Lawgiver. It is not a moral law, therefore, if it be a law, it must be a positive law. It is not a positive law; because it is not distinctly expressed or promulgated by the Lawgiver. Therefore it is not a law, and to substitute it

for a law, is a transgression of that law. You do substitute it for what you acknowledge to be a law; and, therefore, are guilty of transgressing it, i.e. guilty of *sin*. An argument might be raised from the *mode* and *tense* of positive institutions, which would lead to the same result. Your brethren have nothing better to bring, in favour of infant baptism, than the *silence* of Scripture respecting it. How different were the reasonings of Paul! He proves, that the tribe of Judah had nothing to do with Aaron's priesthood, from the *silence* of Moses: "*of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood.*"

Pedobaptist. If we considered baptism as a saving ordinance, we might give more attention to your arguments. But now, we do not think the mere mode to be of so much consequence as to prevent communion at the Lord's table.

Baptist. It is not the mode, but baptism itself which we think you want to qualify you. True, we do not believe baptism will save any one; nor will the Lord's Supper; but both are necessary to obedience to the laws of Christ, and, therefore, are worthy of our attention and regard.

Pedobaptist. We are willing to invite you to commune with us notwithstanding our differences.

Baptist. True, you believe us to be baptized. By admitting us, you make no sacrifice of principle. Did we admit you, we should practically deny, that baptism is pre-requisite to the Lord's Supper, a principle to which you adhere as strongly as we do. Would this be right?

Pedobaptist. We sincerely believe that we have been baptized.

Baptist. And, therefore, you sincerely believe you are qualified for admittance to the Lord's Supper. But your sincerity does not establish the fact in either case. A man may be sincerely wrong. Paul was sincere before his conversion; but he was sincerely wrong. And, when he assayed to join himself to the disciples, they would not admit him, until they themselves were convinced, that he was sincerely right.

You would not admit to church fellowship all who sincerely believe they ought to be admitted. We are not to judge of a man's sincerity : that is a thing between him and his God. How far soever it may go in *moral* duty, it cannot go a step in *positive* duty. If you are sincere in the belief of the validity of your baptism, and therefore it is valid ; I presume you will admit, that we also are sincere in the belief that it is not valid, and for the same reason, it is not. What is this argument worth ?

Pedobaptist. Who is to be judge of what is baptism, in this case ?

Baptist. Who ?—Either the church or the candidate, or nobody. If we suppose the candidate to be judge, I ask, Of what use is the church ? Why was it established ? How is it independent ? If such a principle were adopted, what would be the result of it ?—Doubtless the church must be judge ; and she must decide, not according to her own caprice, (for in that case she would be both judge and lawgiver) but according to definite laws, and well established precedents.

I will now dismiss the two disputants with the remark, that I think my Baptist did very well, except that he dwelt rather long upon baptism. But he must be pardoned in that : it is *characteristic*.

If it is unlawful and wicked for an unbaptized person to partake of the Lord's Supper, no church ought to invite such to the Lord's Supper as they believe to be unbaptized.

The Baptists believe their Pedobaptist brethren to be unbaptized. Therefore, Baptists ought not to invite their Pedobaptist brethren to the Lord's Supper.

Is not this, my brother, consistent with the principle laid down in my former letter ?

Do we therefore slight our Pedobaptist brethren ? Do we feel uncharitable towards them ? By no means. We love them as *unbaptized* brethren. We wish to unite with them in every religious duty. But we cannot go beyond the word of the Lord. And I

know that they cannot enjoy our invitation if they know we give it at the expense of principle and conscience.

II. The second class of Christians, whom, you say, we do not admit to the Lord's table, are such as we believe to be baptized, but who in other respects differ from us.

By these I suppose you mean the *Free-will Baptists*, and the *Methodists*. We consider them as brethren, and rejoice in all the good they are instrumental in doing. We believe them to be sincere in every sentiment they uphold. But we cannot commune with them. Why?—I will let my Baptist defend his own practice.

Methodist. Why do you not admit us, whom you believe to be baptized, to your communion?

Baptist. Let me ask you, why you do not join our church?

Methodist. Because we cannot fellowship your doctrines.

Baptist. We have the same reason for not admitting you to our communion. How can you enter a church that you cannot fellowship, and partake with them at the Lord's table?

Methodist. Notwithstanding our differences we cheerfully invite you.

Baptist. True. But in this you are quite inconsistent with yourselves. In the *twenty-second* section of your Book of Discipline, you say; "*No person shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper among us, who is guilty of any practice for which we would exclude a member of our church.*" In the *eighteenth* section of the same Book, you ask,—"*What shall be done with those Ministers or preachers, who hold and disseminate publicly or privately, doctrines which are contrary to our articles of religion?*" The answer is: "*Let the same process be observed as in cases of gross immorality.*" Now this I believe is just as it should be. Churches were, no doubt, established for the purpose of preserving pure the doctrines and ordi-

nances of the gospel. "The principle end," says Dr. Owen, "of Christ's appointing, continuing or preserving any church on the earth is the celebration of the solemn worship of God. And those churches do exceedingly mistake their duty and the very end of their being, which make it not their principal business to take care of the due celebration of that worship which the Lord Christ hath appointed." Should a church admit members which it considers erroneous in principle and practice, such persons might gain the ascendancy, and thus change the whole character of the church: or if they continued to be the minority, they might cause divisions and contentions without end. And if such cannot be admitted into the church, they cannot be admitted to the table of the Lord. Saith Jehovah (Lev. 24. 22.) "*Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country.*" Now can you invite to the privileges of your church those who, you believe, are engaged in disseminating error, dishonorable to God, and destructive to the interests of man? Such you believe our sentiments to be. Look at your tract, No. 35, which has a free and extended circulation throughout this country. In it, you tell our countrymen, that the doctrines, you know we embrace, have "*a direct and manifest tendency to overthrow the whole christian revelation;*" that they "*represent Christ as an hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity;*" that they "*represent the most holy God as worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust.*"

Now for the correctness of this we hold your denomination responsible; because it is published by their authority, and disseminated by their means. If it is true, you must exclude us, even if we belonged to your church; and, of course, according to your rules, you cannot now receive us to the Lord's table. If it is not true, you are guilty of slander, which is immoral conduct; and, according to your own rules, we cannot receive you to the Lord's table, until repentance is manifested, and a suitable confession is made. We do not hesitate to believe the latter.

Methodist. The Pedobaptists admit us, and they embrace the *same sentiments* you do.

Baptist. True: but we are not accountable for their practice. We derive our rule from the word of God. By that we must stand or fall. Did we possess the right of establishing new laws in the church of God, *as your twenty-second article seems to imply*; it is possible we might do it; so as to admit all real Christians. We have no such right, and do not desire it. He that makes laws, is responsible for their tendency. Who then would dare to become responsible, by assuming the office of lawgiver?

Is it no matter what a man believes, if he is a Christian, my brother? So some people say, who would be startled to be called Antinomians. "*As a man believes so is he*;" *so he does, if he is sincere*. And yet, is it no matter what he *believes*? If it is no matter what a man believes; then, a church can receive any Christian, let his sentiments be what they may. If it is matter what a man believes; then, churches should guard against corrupt sentiment; should exclude persons of corrupt sentiment; should refuse to admit such persons to the Lord's table. Can right principles lead to wrong practice?—Wrong principles are sinful.—Wrong practice is sin.

III. The third class you have mentioned, with whom, you say, we do not commune, are Baptists in sentiment and practice; but they belong to Pedobaptist churches.

They, and all Open-communion Baptists, Free-will Baptists, Christians, and such Methodists as believe only in immersion, assume as a fact, what is not true, that positive duties bear no important relation to each other, *as to time*.

They *practically* admit, that, not churches, but the candidates have a right to judge of their qualifications; and, that, not actual obedience to the commands of Christ is required, but sincerity. Upon such principles they evidently *act*, if they have not adopted them. Respecting these views, I have already said something, to which I refer you.

Now such as belong to this third class may ask, why we do not admit them to the table of the Lord ; but we can ask them, with more propriety, why they do not join our church. They disbelieve the sentiments and practices they uphold, and, in every case, where Baptists and Pedobaptists clash, they take the side of what they believe to be error, against what they believe to be truth. To such we say, Why do you not join us in the defence of what you believe to be truth ? What good motive can you have to keep aloof from us ? What is the influence of the course you pursue ? We invite you, we entreat you, to boldly and manfully sustain the truth, wherever you find it. Is it not hard, that we should be deprived of your influence, while we are struggling for what you believe to be correct in principle and practice ; Will you also join in the hue and cry of, "*Down with the Baptists ?*" "*Et tu Brute ?*" Our arms are open to receive you. We should rejoice to welcome you to all the duties and privileges of our church. But we cannot compel you. If you will walk "*disorderly,*" you impose upon us the unwelcome duty of withdrawing from you. Are we therefore illiberal ? When our Saviour was on earth, "many believed on him that did not confess him, lest they should be turned out of the synagogue." An expulsion from the synagogue was attended by a solemn imprecation of the most dreadful anathemas, and by a marked neglect and despite of the whole nation. These persons thought they might become the friends of Jesus, and, yet, by not confessing him openly, be secured from all the miseries of expulsion. But because they did not confess him openly, they were denounced as loving the praise of men more than the praise of God. *Did our Saviour invite such to his table ?*

Suppose that five brethren of a Pedobaptist church, three of whom are Pedobaptists in principle and practice, and two Baptists, should present themselves as communicants to one of our churches. Suppose we receive the Baptists, and reject the Pedobaptists, for

reasons given in the first section. Would such a course give better satisfaction? Should we be considered any more liberal? Would not the rejected brethren feel injured more, on account of the distinction made, than if they were all rejected? And would the admitted feel at home, where those with whom they are wont to commune, are not permitted to come? No. This would not be satisfactory. All must be admitted. If we admit them all, we must either believe that sprinkling and infant baptism is valid baptism, or renounce the principle that baptism is pre-requisite to the Lord's supper; neither of which we can do.

IV. I have now given you some of the reasons which, I think, establish the propriety of that restriction, which the Baptists observe in their communion at the Lord's table.

It is certainly to be regretted, that so much disorder has been introduced among Christians, as to make this restriction necessary; and perhaps we feel more tenderly upon this subject, than those who make it an objection against us. But we believe that the difficulty is not occasioned by a strict adherence to the laws of Christ. If all believers were baptized, and embraced the doctrines of the Bible, there would be no restricted communion. In the days of the Apostles, there was "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Those who embraced wrong sentiments and practice were excluded from the churches, and numbered with the world. There was then, of course, no restricted communion, since they were of one faith and order.

The case is different now. Different denominations lift their standards in opposition to each other. Their ministers labour to establish them in the doctrines they have already embraced; and, while they denounce each other's sentiments and practice as erroneous, they claim to be the churches of Christ. Let a man be a Christian, whatever his sentiments may be, he may find some church whose sentiments harmonize with his own. Sentiments, for which a man is excluded from one church, become his best recom-

mentation to another. Notwithstanding this discord, the members of one denomination say to the members of another denomination, We have a right to the privileges of your churches, and if you do not yield them you are *illiberal*! Now I ask, my dear brother, what is meant by liberality? Is it compromising the truths of the gospel; or the ordinances of the gospel? Is it the sacrifice of principle to the wishes of mankind?—If so, I must confess, I am not liberal.

Let us suppose, that, among the conflicting denominations of Christians now existing, there is one actually free from the errors that abound, and is determined to preserve her purity. How will she do it? By free fellowship, and free communion with those that are erroneous? Or by conducting precisely towards them, as the apostolic churches conducted towards the same characters? In this case there can be no doubt. No denomination of Christians, perhaps, will confidently arrogate to themselves this character; but every denomination *believe* it to be their character. They must act upon their belief; and, therefore, must, to be consistent, conduct towards all others upon the supposition, that they are right, and, the others are wrong.

V. Finally, my brother, let me most earnestly exhort you to shun error *wherever* you see it, and embrace the truth *wherever* you find it. You say in your first letter, that you believe the Baptists to be correct in Baptism; but you object to their terms of communion. But why should, what you do not believe, prevent you from embracing what you do believe? If you believe in immersion, as the only mode of baptism, be immersed; if believer's baptism is the only Christian baptism, be baptized upon the profession of your faith. If you do not believe in restricted communion, do not embrace it. Pursue and uphold what is right, as far as you see it to be right. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know," saith the Lord.

I close this letter with the desire that we may both be willing to be guided by Scripture rules, and fear and obey God rather than man; and, while we have

supreme regard for the authority and glory of the great Lawgiver of the church, may strive together, not for the faith imposed upon us by men, but for "the faith once delivered to the saints."

This is to approximate to the spirit of ancient saints, and to glorify the Saviour in our bodies and spirits which are his. Did all Christians act up to this rule, we might soon see truth triumphant, and error prostrated in the dust. We might soon joyfully hail the dawn of a day of uniformity and deep toned and universal piety. But if we cleave to that which we believe to be error, either in principle or practice, however small and indifferent it may appear, we have no reason to believe that our heart is right in the sight of that God, who has condescended, for our sakes, and for the glory of his name, so clearly to reveal his truth, as that we can read it and understand it, and to accompany its manifestation with the tokens of his omnipotence. What God has commanded cannot be a matter of indifference with his people. An idea so absurd and impious as this, cannot but meet with the marked disapprobation of God. He has not imposed laws upon us, which we may, or may not observe, as we please.

Yours affectionately,

E. FOSTER.

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